



Fall City

A feature film synopsis by Nathan D. Lee & Erich Cannon

Short Synopsis

Feeling like life has taken everything from him, recently-paroled thief Jon Price is forced to return to his small, rainy hometown of Fall City, Washington where he gets a job at the post office for the holidays. At home he meets Olivia, a struggling single mother, who shows Jon true kindness. Jon unexpectedly begins to find joy as he grows closer to Olivia and begins filling the role of a father for her daughter, Adiel. Working to change, Jon begins responding to children's letters to Santa. But Jon's new life crumbles when his past is revealed, he is fired from work and his Santa letters get locked away. Even worse, Jon intercepts a letter from Olivia and discovers her Christmas wish is to have her ex come home. Suddenly, with everything taken from him again, Jon has to decide how much he's willing to sacrifice to give Olivia what she wants or if he will fight to take back the happy life he finally found.

Full Synopsis

Life has taken a lot from 28-year-old, Jon Price. Once a hopeful talented kid in high school, Jon was financially forced to drop out of college and now makes his living breaking into cars and pawning what he can. Paroled from prison just after Thanksgiving, Jon is caught by a car owner and beaten severely. Unable to make rent, dejected and completely alone, Jon is forced to return to his small, rainy hometown of Fall City, Washington to live with his mom for the holidays.

His mom is excited to see Jon after so many years, and still believing he is all she dreamed her son would be, she is anxious to get him involved in the town. Lying about his criminal history, Jon gets a job at the local Post Office, where his late father used to be the Postmaster. Grateful for a place to hide from the world, Jon discovers that an old high school enemy, Derek, also works there, and is clearly going to make his job a living hell. He also discovers a huge amount of children's Santa letters in the dead letter office—"where dreams go to die," he muses.

Lost and down, Jon turns back to breaking into cars. In the middle of the act, he is stopped by Olivia, a single mom who works at the local Supercuts. Thinking he's locked his keys in, she helps him break into the car. Afterwards Olivia asks for a returned favor -- she needs help roll-starting her car. It's a flirtatious encounter, and the first time we really see Jon light up. After Olivia leaves, Jon decides not to steal from the car she helped him break into.

Unfortunately, this moment of joy is brief. Derek is becoming unbearable as he vies for a promotion at the Post Office, and Jon loses his connection on a rare phone call from his military brother who has just told him he won't be able to call for Christmas. Venting his anger on the street, Jon angrily tells a nearby five-year-old girl there is no Santa Claus. He quickly meets the girl's mother – it's Olivia. She furiously yells at him for being so horrible and walks away.

Enraged, Jon turns to a nearby truck and smashes its window. Catching his breath, Jon looks into the car -- there is a bag of expensive construction tools, and he makes a choice. Reaching for the tools Jon is suddenly yanked from the truck and punched in the stomach. The trucks owner beats Jon severely and takes off in his truck, leaving Jon alone on the ground.

In his lowest moment, Jon turns to an unexpected source, his former youth minister, Pastor Adam. Jon confides in Pastor Adam with his frustrations about life, saying, "The harder you work the more gets taken from you—even as a child. You are told that Santa Claus is real. This magical picture of the world is painted for you, and it is all taken away—it's all a lie." Jon tells Pastor Adam about what happened with this new girl he met and about his hopelessness. The pastor encourages Jon to not let things go so easily. "Repairing damage can take sacrifice," he tells him.

On this advice, Jon buys a new car battery and humbly brings it to Olivia at Supercuts. Jon encourages Olivia to have her daughter, Adiel, write to Santa, assuring her that Santa will write back this year.

While at work, Jon starts finding small joys in responding to the Santa letters, but he continues to scuffle with Derek as Derek assumes authority over Jon. Away from work, Jon grows closer to Olivia and Adiel; spending time with them in the evenings and starting to fill in a role he never would have expected—the role of a father figure.

One night after putting Adiel down to bed, Jon and Olivia have a quiet late-night conversation. Jon tells Olivia about the Christmas when his dad told him there was no Santa Claus. His grandpa had just died, and they were getting ready for the funeral. "I couldn't believe it," he tells Olivia. "It felt like I had been lied to," he tells Olivia. He explains that his grandpa used to dress up as Santa on Christmas Eve, so him and his brother could sneak a peek of him delivering their presents. "It was one of the most magical moments of my life," he tells her, "then I was told that it wasn't even real."

Olivia tells Jon that she knows what it's like to have happiness taken away. She describes her dream of having a family and how it unraveled. That night Jon learns that Olivia asked her husband to leave because he wasn't taking things seriously and wasn't providing for his family. She still sees her estranged husband as they are figuring out custody of their daughter and attending counseling sessions -- it's not going so well. Within himself, Jon feels the true and deep desire to take care of Olivia and Adiel. For the first time since his childhood he is feeling the joy of Christmas! She has been struggling to keep a hopeful face for her daughter these holidays, but it hadn't seemed like Christmas until he came around.

After Jon has written hundreds of Santa letters, Adiel's letter arrives at the Post Office. The only thing she asks for is an original Care Bear named Wish Bear. Jon borrows his mom's car and travels to Seattle in an effort to find and buy Adiel's gift, despite the hefty price tag for the vintage toy.

On his way to Olivia's house to proudly deliver the Wish Bear, Jon sees Olivia leaving a counseling session at the church with her estranged husband, and it's Derek!

While working on December 23rd Jon intercepts a letter from Olivia to Derek. He puts it in his pocket and hides out in the dead letter office. It is there that the Postmaster tells Jon that his work at the Post Office is over. It has come to his attention that Jon lied about his parole and it is illegal for him to have a government job.

Leaving the Post Office and all of the letters he wrote on that dismally gray day, Jon runs into Olivia, who has just found out about his past. With more stabbing words than ever, she tells Jon that she was wrong to trust him, that he lied to her and to her daughter. She tells him, "You were right, Jon. Life is just a lie, and you are part of it!"

Feeling that life has taken everything from him yet again, Jon escapes to a local tavern, where he runs into Derek. The two of them argue, and their frustrations about each other really come out. Derek admits that he was the one who got Jon fired. Derek got a notice from the government about the use of Jon's Social Security number and thought telling the Postmaster was the right thing to do. Jon accuses Derek of always being a lazy loser before and asks why he is being so uptight now. Derek's answer is not what Jon is expecting. "I have a family, Jon. I wasn't providing or taking care of them, so I was asked to leave until I could. I needed that job so I wouldn't lose my family."

Feeling unexpected sympathy for Derek, Jon is more lost than ever. He goes back to Pastor Adam, who is setting up for his Christmas morning service. Jon breaks down as he tells Pastor Adam that he tried what he told him, he gave all he could, and it failed. "Are you giving, or are you sacrificing, Jon?" Pastor Adam gently inquires. "Giving something away is the easy part. Giving away something that we want to keep... that is sacrifice. You have to let go of what you are seeking and give for an entirely different reason."

At home that night Jon's mom brings him a box of his Dad's old things. As they go through the box, Jon learns that his dad only worked at the post office because he couldn't make it living his dream of captaining fishing boats. "It was a huge sacrifice for him," his mom tells him, "but he took a job at the post office so he could support his family." Looking through the box, Jon discovers that his dad had many difficulties in his own life, and yet he persevered. Among the other things in the box, Jon finds his grandpa's old Santa suit.

On the rainy night of Christmas Eve, dressed in his grandpa's Santa suit, Jon breaks into the post office and steals the letters he wrote from Santa. Moving stealthily from house to house, the Santa-

suit-clad Jon delivers letters to individual porches and mailboxes. Before he knows it, police begin chasing him, he runs his car into a ditch and the letters all get soaked.

Hiding behind a grocery store, completely ready to give up, Jon recalls that Olivia's letter to Derek is still in his back pocket. He pulls it out and opens it. In it, Olivia sincerely apologizes to Derek and offers him a second chance, saying that she has learned recently how important it is for there to be a strong loving man in their family and that what she really wants more than anything is for him to come home for Christmas.

Jon walks to Olivia's house with Adiel's letter from Santa and the Wish Bear in hand. Looking through the window, Jon sees Olivia, laying on her couch next to the Christmas tree, in tears. He reaches to knock and then looks again at the letter, conflicted. Backing away, Jon knocks over a potted plant on the porch, which crashes loudly. He panics and runs away, still holding the items he meant to deliver. Adiel is awakened and looks out her window to see Jon running away. Delighted, she exclaims: "It's Santa!"

Escaping from police, Jon makes his way to Derek's apartment. In a humble and solemn exchange, Jon apologizes and hands Derek Olivia's letter. "She still wants you back." He tells him.

As he leaves Derek's apartment, the police spot him and he is again on the run. That rainy Christmas Eve, he sleeps under a bridge on the Snoqualmie river.

Night becomes a frost-covered Christmas morning. The police are gone, and Jon, in his filthy Santa suit, climbs out from underneath the bridge and takes in the frost sparkling in the rising sunlight with a smile. His phone rings, breaking the silence; it's his brother, who unexpectedly got a chance to call from the Middle East for Christmas. The brothers enjoy a long uninterrupted conversation as Jon paces along the water's edge.

Later that morning, Jon returns to Olivia's house, where he places the Wish Bear and Adiel's letter at their door. Peeking inside the window he sees Derek and Olivia happily watching Adiel open gifts.

Quietly, Jon turns to leave, but is stopped when Olivia comes to the door. Jon gives her the Wish Bear, which turns out was a gift she wanted when she was little; Adiel had asked for it as a gift to her mom. Olivia is moved to tears by both the actions of her daughter and of Jon. She hugs him warmly and wishes him a Merry Christmas.

Jon walks home amid the cheerily decorated streets, happy, hopeful and ready to start fresh.

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Mood Board

Jon's childhood and memories will embrace the look and feel of a lower income home in the 1980s. While staying true to the period, we'll emphasize the warmth, safety and magic of life as a child.



Jon's present-day grown-up life will be designed to emphasize his disillusionment with life. It will be much cooler colors with lower contrast, and the few warm colors there are will be treated harsher, and less comforting.



Playing against type, we'll use rain instead of snow for the Christmas season. This both reflects Jon's emotions and sets up the thematic truth that a beautiful Christmas can be had in the rain.



As Jon grows closer to Olivia and finds joy acting as Adiel's father, we'll introduce warmth into the picture once again but this time we'll use a more full range of warm colors to emphasize that he is experiencing this joy from a more mature place — he's starting to find joy in making Christmas for others.

Nov 30, 2012

Dear Santa,

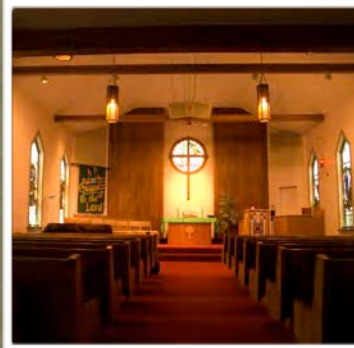
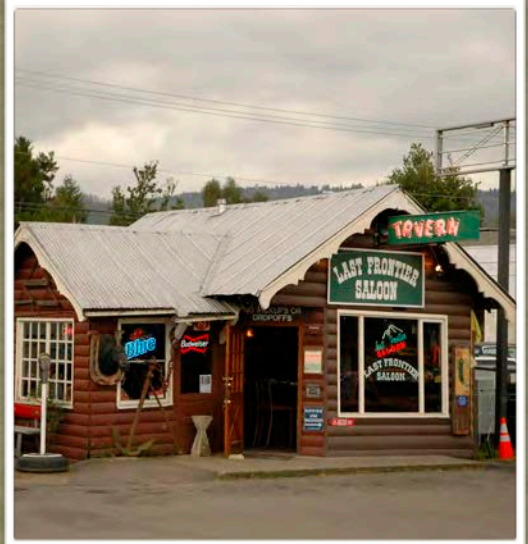
I am a good boy.
I am nice to my little
brother. I want Legos,
Star wars, and some
Surprises. I will leave
cookies for you and
applesauce for the
reindeer. I like the
elves who watch us.

love, Alex Wlezorek
age 6



As Jon learns to truly sacrifice — on Christmas morning — we'll see the gold of a sunrise, not against snow, but against the glittering white frost left behind from a night of rain. The warmth of the sun sharing the screen with the cool blue frost of the morning is designed to encapsulate the truth of growing up—that the joy of childhood can be had among the difficulties of adulthood, and literally and symbolically, a beautiful Christmas can be had in the rain.





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Location Photographs

Filming locations in Fall City, WA include River Street, the Snoqualmie River bridge, Last Chance Saloon, Fall City Methodist church, and a storefront that can be turned into a Supercuts. Other possible locations include the Fall City post office, Farmhouse Market, and various residential streets and houses.

